

I sent Congress a plan to balance the budget, and I submitted a balanced budget plan again a few weeks ago.

The constitutional amendment could have caused or worsened recessions, permitted a minority of legislators to hold the Nation's creditworthiness hostage, involved unelected judges in spending and tax policy, and threatened Social Security and other vital benefits.

Now that the amendment vote has taken place, I call on Congress to join me in passing a plan to balance the budget by 2002 while protecting our values, strengthening education, and providing targeted tax relief to working families.

At the end of Congress' last session, we saw several instances of productive bipartisan cooperation. I hope that we can continue this spirit of bipartisanship and make progress for the American people by reaching agreement on a balanced budget plan this year. All it takes is their votes and my signature.

It's time to do the real work of balancing the budget.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Hong Kong-United States Extradition Agreement

March 3, 1997

To the Congress of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification as a treaty, I transmit herewith the Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Hong Kong for the Surrender of Fugitive Offenders signed at Hong Kong on December 20, 1996 (hereinafter referred to as "the Agreement"). In addition, I transmit for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to the Agreement. As a treaty, this Agreement will not require implementing legislation.

This Agreement will, upon entry into force, enhance cooperation between the law enforcement communities of the United States and Hong Kong, and will provide a framework and basic protections for extraditions after the reversion of Hong Kong to the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China on July 1, 1997. Given the absence

of an extradition treaty with the People's Republic of China, this Treaty would provide the means to continue an extradition relationship with Hong Kong after reversion and avoid a gap in law enforcement. It will thereby make a significant contribution to international law enforcement efforts.

The provisions in this Agreement follow generally the form and content of extradition treaties recently concluded by the United States. In addition, the Agreement contains several provisions specially designed in light of the particular status of Hong Kong. The Agreement's basic protections for fugitives are also made expressly applicable to fugitives surrendered by the two parties before the new treaty enters into force.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Agreement and give its advice and consent to its ratification as a treaty.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
March 3, 1997.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 5.

Remarks on Signing the Memorandum on Child Safety Lock Devices for Handguns and an Exchange With Reporters

March 5, 1997

The President. Good morning. I'd like to welcome here Senators Biden and Boxer, Durbin and Feinstein, Kohl; Congressmen Conyers, Schumer, and Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy; along with Deputy Attorney General Jamie Gorelick, Treasury's Under Secretary for Enforcement Ray Kelly; our friends Jim and Sarah Brady; and members of the law enforcement community. Did I leave anyone from Congress out? Senators? [*Inaudible*] Did I get everybody? Good.

Four years ago, we made a commitment to take our streets back from crime and violence with a comprehensive plan: first, to put 100,000 community police officers on our streets, to put new, tough penalties on the books, to steer young people away from crime and gangs and drugs, to keep guns out

of the hands of criminals with the assault weapons ban and the Brady bill. Last week I announced that the Brady bill has already stopped 186,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers from purchasing handguns.

Repeatedly I have said that fighting the scourge of juvenile crime and violence will be my top law enforcement priority in the next 4 years. Two weeks ago, I submitted to Congress my antigang and youth violence strategy. One of this bill's key provisions will require gun dealers to provide safety locks with every handgun they sell, to prevent unauthorized use by teenage criminals and to protect children too young to know what they're doing.

Today I announced a series of new steps we must take immediately to protect our children, our neighbors, and our police officers from tragedies caused by firearms in the wrong hands. First, we must keep guns out of the hands of children.

The Centers for Disease Control report that nearly 1.2 million children return from school to a home with no adult supervision but with a loaded and unlocked firearm. Easy access means deadly consequences. Children and teenagers cause over 10,000 unintentional shootings every year. Guns cause one in every four deaths of teenagers age 15 to 19. Last month the Centers for Disease Control reported that the rate of children from birth to age 14 who are killed by firearms in America is nearly 12 times higher than in 25 other industrialized countries combined.

America cannot tolerate this. Until Congress makes child safety locks the law of the land, we must do everything we can to prevent unauthorized firearms use.

I want to make sure the Federal Government is doing its part. Each year the Federal Government issues thousands of handguns to law enforcement agents. Unfortunately, we know all too well that even firearms issued to law enforcement are sometimes tragically misused. Today I am directing that every Federal agency shall require child safety locking devices with every handgun issued. The directive I'm about to sign requires every department and every agency to develop a plan to accomplish this commonsense safety measure and to implement it as soon

as possible. And Congress should pass my proposal to require these locks with every handgun in the very near future. If it's good enough for law enforcement, it's good enough for all our citizens.

The second step we're taking today will make it harder for people to come to America, purchase weapons, and commit crimes against Americans. We were all shocked to learn of the foreign gunman who shot seven people on top of the Empire State Building, killing one of them and then killing himself. He apparently bought this gun after living in a Florida motel for just 3 weeks. Federal law requires legal aliens to live at least 90 days in a State before they are allowed to purchase a handgun. But the application to buy a gun does not even ask how long an applicant has lived at his or her current address.

As a first step to reduce illegal handgun purchases by foreigners, today I'm announcing that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms will immediately require applicants to certify that they have been residents for at least 90 days in the State where they are trying to buy a gun. But this is not enough. I call on Congress to pass the bill sponsored by Senators Kennedy and Durbin and Congressman Schumer that will prohibit all foreign visitors from buying or carrying guns in the United States.

Finally, as we work to make all our people safer, we must never forget our special obligation to police officers, like those who are with me today, who risk their lives to protect us all. It is long past time for Congress to listen to America's law enforcement officers and ban cop-killer bullets once and for all.

I have sent this legislation to Congress twice before, and they failed to act. They should not delay this effort again. We don't need to study this issue any more to determine what specific materials can be used to make armor-piercing bullets. We need a simple test and a straightforward ban. If a bullet can tear through a bulletproof vest like a hot knife through butter, it should be against the law, and that is the bottom line. These bullets are designed for one purpose only, to kill police officers. They have no place on our streets.

Three simple steps to make our children, our streets, and our law enforcement officers safer: Child safety locks on handguns, new rules to prevent foreign criminals from buying guns in the United States, a straightforward ban on cop-killer bullets. I will do my part. I thank the Members of Congress who are here, especially for their leadership, and I ask the Congress to act on this important legislation.

Now, let me sign this order here, and then I'll answer any questions you have.

[At this point, the President signed the memorandum.]

Thank you.

Police Firepower

Q. The police were outgunned in Los Angeles. Do you think there's also a problem with police departments not having enough firepower?

The President. There could be, but I think the real problem is—the way we sought to deal with that is by dealing with the assault weapons ban. I think most police departments will be adequately armed if we can get the assault weapons out of the hands of the criminals and if we have tougher enforcement of the Brady bill. It's—186,000 blocked sales is no small number, even in a big country like ours—186,000. That's pretty impressive.

1996 Campaign Financing

Q. What do you think of the Republicans suggesting they'll vote tomorrow in the Senate on insisting there be an independent counsel on campaign financial fundraising?

The President. Well, I think, you know, there is a law on that. It's a legal question. It shouldn't be a political one.

Cop-Killer Bullet Legislation

Q. Mr. President, why would you think now that things in the Congress would be any different this time around for cop-killer bullets or for some of these other measures than before?

The President. Because of the clear demonstration of public support. Keep in mind that this Congress, which had originally come into office with a commitment to repeal the—I mean, the last Congress, the Congress

of '95-'96, which came to Congress with a commitment to repeal the assault weapons ban and weaken or repeal the Brady bill, actually agreed with me to strengthen the Brady bill at the end of the last session of Congress in late 1996.

So I think there has been a sea change in the shift of attitude in the Congress as the American people have crystallized their opinions on these issues and made it known.

Furthermore, I think there will be broad support—even broader support for the child safety locks. I would be surprised if you don't have a lot of the gunowners groups—if they didn't support this, it would surprise me. I mean, this is consistent with a lot of the things that they have said in the past, so I think we would have a good chance on that. And on the cop-killer bullets, I think that—you asked my hope, my hope is based on the action that this Congress took at the last session where they voted with us to extend the impact of the Brady bill.

Subpoena of Lippo Group Documents

Q. Mr. President, with the new subpoenas coming out on the Lippo connection to the White House, are you satisfied that there's been no undue influence by outside influence on—by outside countries on either your White House or on your former—your very good friend Web Hubbell?

The President. I have no reason to believe that there has been. But I think that everybody should comply with the information, and we have. And you know, Mr. Burton asked us yesterday I think for some information relating to the allegation of an attempt by the Chinese to influence the American election. And when we have made that—when—we said in our letter to the Justice Department that we assumed anything that we got would be given to the House and Senate Intelligence Committees because we didn't want to raise any questions, we just want to get to the bottom of that. And so, they have it, and whatever is appropriate for them to share with Mr. Burton, they can.

I just think we——

Q. Is Burton grandstanding?

The President. I don't want to get into that. But I believe that the House and Senate committees—Intelligence Committees—

have anything that we had. And so they can share it with them as is appropriate.

Q. Do you have any reason to believe there was influence——

The President. No.

Q. ——attempted influence?

The President. I do not, but I think we have to get—you know, there's an investigation. As I said, the charge is serious; we need to get to the bottom of it. But I have no reasons to believe—I have no personal evidence, but that's not the issue. The issue is this charge has been made, it's—anytime you allege that another government attempted to influence an American election, that's a serious thing and has to be looked into. But I have no personal evidence, but I want the investigation to proceed, and I want the Justice Department to get to the bottom of it. And I expect that they will.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:33 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former White House Press Secretary James S. Brady, who was wounded in the 1981 assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan, and Mr. Brady's wife, Sarah, head of Hand Gun Control, Inc.

Memorandum on Child Safety Lock Devices for Handguns

March 5, 1997

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Child Safety Lock Devices for Handguns

Every day, firearms claim the lives of too many children. Firearms cause 12 percent of fatalities among American children and teens, and one of every four deaths of teenagers ages 15 to 19. These numbers represent not only violent crimes, but also tragic gun accidents. Firearms are now the fourth leading cause of accidental deaths among children ages 5 to 14. Moreover, firearms have become the primary method by which young people commit suicide.

According to a Centers for Disease Control study released earlier this month, the rate of firearm deaths among children up to

14 years old is nearly 12 times higher in the United States than in 25 other industrialized countries combined. The Center also estimates that nearly 1.2 million unsupervised children return from school to a home that has a loaded or unlocked firearm.

Recently, my Administration sent to the Congress our "Anti-Gang and Youth Violence Act of 1997," draft legislation that includes a provision requiring all Federal Firearms Licensed dealers to provide a safety lock device with every firearm sold. Safety lock devices will help to reduce the unauthorized use of handguns by a child at play or a teen who wants to commit a crime. Just as important, safety lock devices can also help deter gun theft.

I have urged the Congress to move this legislation quickly. In the meantime, the Federal Government can serve as an example of gun safety for the Nation by taking an important step to reduce handgun accidents and protect our children from injury and death.

Every year, the Federal Government issues thousands of handguns to our law enforcement agents. While some agencies have already adopted a policy of distributing safety locks for these handguns, this policy should be universally adopted across the Federal Government. That is why I direct you to develop and implement a policy requiring that a safety lock device—as defined in our draft legislation—be provided with any and every handgun issued by your agency to law enforcement officers. You should ensure that all Federal law enforcement officers are informed of this policy and that all issued safety lock devices are accompanied by instructions for their proper use.

All Americans have a responsibility to ensure that guns do not fall into the hands of our children. Your response to this directive will help ensure that this does not happen. Taking this simple step can have a dramatic impact on saving the lives of our children. You should proceed as quickly as possible to carry out this directive.

William J. Clinton